

BUDDHISTS RIP U. S. ENVOY IN SO. VIET NAM

Quote Nolting's Stand Denying Persecution

SAIGON, Viet Nam, July 31

(AP) — Buddhist leaders here publicly admonished American Ambassador Frederick E. Nolting Jr. today, in a printed statement.

Buddhist criticism of Nolting was aimed at a statement attributed to the ambassador printed two days ago in the local English language newspaper.

Nolting was quoted as saying:

"The trouble with this damn thing [the Buddhist dispute with the South Vietnamese government] is that everybody focuses on a tiny aspect of it."

No Evidence

"I myself—I say this from after almost 2½ years—have never seen any evidence of religious persecution."

The Buddhist statement said,

"It is necessary to have lived in central Viet Nam, especially in the provinces of Quang Ngai, Phu Yen, and Binh Dinh for the last five years, and to participate in the life of Buddhists to note frequent cases of [government] persecution . . . exercised under cover of legality."

Informally, a Buddhist spokesman described Nolting's statement as "the ambassador's parting gift to President Ngo Dinh Diem."

Refuses to Comment

Nolting could not be reached for comment. William C. Trueheart, deputy chief of the American mission, said, "We have

no comment on this story at all."

Nolting is scheduled to leave Saigon within several weeks, and will be succeeded by Henry Cabot Lodge Jr.

Critics of the Diem regime, including Buddhist leaders, have charged Nolting has been

too close to the Saigon government and has discounted all criticism.

Buddhist leaders said in an impromptu press conference today they hoped Nolting's statement did not reflect the official United States position on Buddhist grievances.

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